

# Neighbors unite to reclaim park

By **LESLIE FARRIS**  
Of the Emerald

Residents of the West University neighborhood are gathering forces to reclaim their park.

About 50 neighbors met Wednesday to discuss how to stop harassment by vagrants in the West University Neighborhood Park on 14th Avenue between Hilyard and Patterson Streets. The 3-year-old park always has been a hot spot for vagrants, Eugene police say, but this spring the problem has worsened.

David Lutes, a member of the park's design team, reminded those attending the park is owned by the neighborhood — not the city — and it's up to residents to determine how the park should be used.

"The police can't be here 24 hours a day, so now the problem rests with you," Lutes said. "It's a small park, so it's possible for a small group to monopolize it. This other group has been claiming territory every spring, and now we've got to reclaim it as our own."

Neighbors listed numerous incidences of panhandling and verbal harassment. Some said they were physically threatened and "shaken down" by vagrants at the park.

Pam Ford, neighborhood crime prevention coordinator, said men at the park have torn up plants, smashed bottles in the fireplace and destroyed the latticework around the arbor. She said people have been forced to leave the park under physical threat and have had knives pulled on them.

The neighborhood association voted last year to ban alcoholic beverages from the park. But Sgt. Rick Allison, director of Eugene Police law enforcement in the University area, said he ticketed about 10 vagrants last week for drinking in the park.

"As a result, when we got there we had people coming out of the woodwork telling us about being harassed, threatened and intimidated," Allison said. "We suggested they ar-

range a meeting with their neighbors to talk about how to deal with the problem as a group."

And that was the solution mentioned most often during the meeting — confronting the problem as a group.

Allison said people sometimes fear retaliation, and so are reluctant to report harassment and identify a vagrant.

But Allison said that rarely happens because vagrants are warned that such action will only worsen their problems. Allison suggests "you call your neighbors, then come out as a group so you have numerous witnesses."

He also encourages people to contact the police rather than confront a vagrant directly, because many drink and may get violent.

Other suggestions offered were closing the park at night, establishing a neighborhood communications network, and distributing distress whistles.

But all agreed the most crucial solution was high visibility. "We have to let them know this is our park, and we're here to stay," one neighbor said.

Another meeting will be held in the park Sunday at 2 p.m. All are welcome.

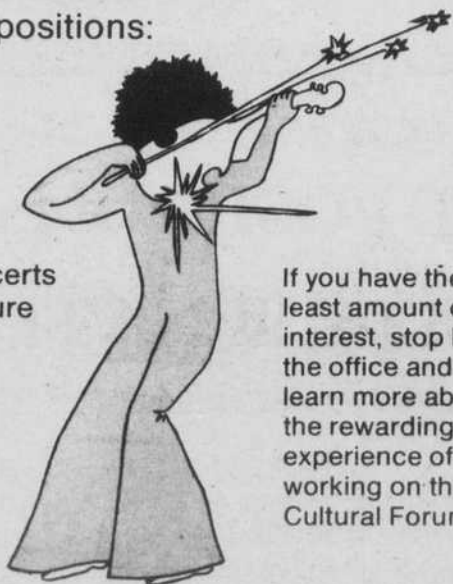


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- Sat 4 **Alien**  
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- Sun 5 **The Cameraman & Sons of the Desert\***  
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- Fri 10 **The Duellists**  
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- Sun 12 **Ball of Fire\***  
180 PLC 7:00 & 9:00
- Fri 17 **Kramer vs Kramer**  
EMU Ballroom 7:00 & 9:15
- Sun 19 **Monkey Business\***  
180 PLC 7:00 & 9:00
- Fri 24 **The Godfather**  
150 Geol 8:00
- Sat 25 **The Godfather, Part Two**  
150 Geol 8:00
- Sun 26 **Mad Wednesday\***  
180 PLC 7:00 & 9:00

### MAY

- Fri 1 "10"  
150 Geol 7:00 & 9:30
- Sun 3 **It's A Gift & I'm No Angel\***  
180 PLC 7:30
- Fri 8 **Being There**  
150 Geol 7:00 & 9:30
- Sun 10 **You Can't Take It With You**  
180 PLC 7:00 & 9:15
- Sat 16 **Apocalypse Now**  
EMU Ballroom 6:30 & 9:30
- Sun 17 **Road to Utopia\***  
180 PLC 7:00 & 9:00
- Fri 29 **Rocky II**  
150 Geol 7:00 & 9:30
- Sun 31 **Ma and Pa Kettle on Vacation\***  
180 PLC 7:00 & 9:00

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- Fri 5 **Rocky and Bullwinkle\***  
150 Geol 7:00 & 9:00

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\*Indicates 75 cent tickets available for children under 12 years of age